

# SLEEP

## WHY ADEQUATE SHUT-EYE IS IMPERATIVE

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### What can sleep-deprivation do?

In today's hustle-and-bustle world, many people are putting in extra hours or burning the midnight oil. And with that, it's challenging to get a full 8 hours of sound, quality sleep!

Missing out on some shut-eye can certainly lead to crankiness, sleepiness, feeling of being "hangry" and an overall lack of energy.

But, an ongoing lack of (or poor-quality) sleep can increase the risk of sub-optimal health outcomes including hypertension, diabetes, obesity, depression, heart attack, stroke and poor cognition.<sup>(1)(2)</sup>

### How does sleep have an impact?

It's hard to believe something as "basic" as sleep can help to mitigate some of these potential issues. However, studies show that this seemingly simple act impacts health in a number of ways.

This is because hormone regulation, cardiac health, and cognitive & mental well-being are all tied to the quality of our sleep. As we sleep, our body works hard in several ways to keep us functioning and performing optimally!

1. [Sleep Disorders and Sleep Deprivation: An Unmet Public Health Problem](#)

2. [The Consequences of Sleep Deprivation on Cognitive Performance](#)

# SLEEP

## HOW SLEEP HAS AN IMPACT

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### Hormone Regulation

The sleep-wake cycle, along with sleep quality and duration, influence the hormones that impact appetite control, blood sugar regulation and metabolism. These hormones work in rhythm, and disrupted sleep is a large factor in throwing that rhythm out of balance.<sup>(1)</sup>

### Cardiac Health

Various heart conditions including hypertension, coronary heart disease and irregular heartbeats are found to be more common among those who have less duration and quality of sleep. Quite simply, when we sleep, our blood pressure decreases and allows the vessels of the heart to "relax" a bit, taking some of the strain off. And, the hormones we discussed previously have an impact on heart health as well, so getting those in balance can positively impact this area of health too!<sup>(2)</sup>

### Cognitive Health

As we sleep, our brains are up to some pretty amazing things: connections between brain cells are strengthened, information moves from "short term memory" to "long term memory", and memories are reactivated. So it's no surprise that skimping on sleep can impact our cognitive ability. In fact, studies show that one of the largest predictors of cognitive function is the average number of minutes someone is awake during "sleep" hours.<sup>(3)(4)</sup>

### Mental Health

It has long been observed that sleep issues like insomnia are part-and-parcel of having depression or another type of mental health condition; in fact, studies suggest that insomnia might indicate a "first step towards onset of psychopathology". And, Professor of Neuroscience at UC Berkley, Matthew Walker, describes in his book *Why We Sleep* that "the brain without sleep as reverting to a "pattern of uncontrolled reactivity", meaning that during our waking hours we may be less able to control behaviors and responses.<sup>(5)</sup>

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1. [The Impact of Sleep and Circadian Disturbance on Hormones and Metabolism](#)

2. [Sleep Duration as a Risk Factor for Cardiovascular Disease](#)

3. [The Consequences of Sleep Deprivation on Cognitive Performance](#)

4. [Sleep and Cognition](#)

5. [Sleep, Insomnia and Depression](#)



# KEY AREAS OF FOCUS FOR SUPPORTING SLEEP

01

## Nutrient-dense Diet

A nutrient-dense diet with an appropriate balance of macronutrients (fat, protein and carbs) are a foundation for building good sleep. Magnesium and melatonin from foods like bananas, leafy greens, nuts and cherries are a great building block to begin with. Including healthy fats and protein, particularly later in the day, can help support nocturnal hormone activity and set the stage for deeper and more restful sleep.

02

## Timing of Meals

Ceasing food intake 2–3 hours before bed is often recommended; this allows the body's digestive processes to have time to do their heaviest work before turning in for the night, and can allow hormones to be in a good balance before bed. However, restricting food intake too early can have the opposite effect by causing cortisol to increase and impacting overall hormone balance. Meal timing and sleep is largely bioindividual and experimentation may be helpful in determining what works best for you!

03

## Sleep Hygiene

Practicing good sleep "hygiene" is a great way to support restful sleep. Having a consistent wake and sleep schedule is important, as is exposure to sunlight in the first moments after waking; these help ensure a proper circadian rhythm by signaling cortisol to rise in the morning, and melatonin to rise in the evening. Additionally, limiting blue light exposure in the hours before bed can help ensure that melatonin begins producing as it should in the evening hours.

04

## Lifestyle

Sleep and sleep quality are often tied to various aspects of lifestyle; through our day-to-day practices, we can have an impact on how much shut-eye we are getting! Countering stress with relaxation techniques, daily exercise, and of course, diet, all have an impact. Additionally, incorporating habits like keeping your sleeping space tidy and clean, having a cooler ambient temperature at bed time, keeping work and devices out of the bedroom, and minimizing caffeine and alcohol intake can all help to make sure your slumber is sweet!

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# STRATEGIES TO HELP PROMOTE BETTER SLEEP

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01

## **Start small with what feels most supportive**

Sweeping changes done all-at-once can feel overwhelming, leading to stress and burnout. Choose 1-3 small changes to start, and get into a rhythm with them before incorporating more.

02

## **Set your mindset for success**

It's easy to fall into the "I can't have this/ do this" trap. Framing the changes you're making with a mindset of "I'm taking of my sleep!" can be helpful, especially when pressing pause on certain foods or activities.

03

## **Plan ahead**

Planning and organizing activities at times that will allow you to have proper rest in the evening hours can help you unwind more efficiently before bed. This can also help to reduce stress, having a positive impact on overall health!

04

## **Put it on your calendar**

Speaking of planning ahead -- add strategic time to your calendar for items that support restful sleep: evening self-care, meditation or prayer, and journaling are all examples of what is more likely to be done if it's on the calendar!

05

## **Eat for sleep**

Foods that help promote appropriate hormone rhythm will also help promote better sleep! Healthy fats and proteins can help to prevent cortisol and blood sugar surges, especially important as we're winding down for bed. Incorporating more of these, while limiting starchy carbs at your last meal of the day can help set the stage for better sleep!

06

## **Get your Circadian Rhythm in rhythm!**

Exposing your eyes to morning sunlight within the first few minutes of waking will signal the body to begin producing cortisol; cortisol is supposed to be it's highest in the morning so that you have energy for the day, then taper off toward evening, when melatonin should begin rising.



07

## **Limit blue light exposure**

Blue light has been shown to suppress melatonin production, as well as excite areas of the brain that hamper preparation for sleep. Using blue light blocking glasses or screens with devices and smart TV's in the hours leading up to sleep can be helpful, as can keeping devices out of the bedroom to prevent scrolling just before laying down to sleep.<sup>(1)</sup>

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1. [Protecting the Melatonin Rhythm through Circadian Healthy Light Exposure](#)

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## Take charge of your sleep today!

Embracing changes, no matter how small, is an empowering step towards better sleep and overall health. If you're ready to make changes but aren't sure where to start or need support along your journey, I'm here to help!

Together, we can create a personalized plan that fits your lifestyle!



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